

Issue Date: **December 22, 1971**

Indian-Pakistani War Ends; East Pakistan Severed from West; Pakistani President Yahya Resigns, Bhutto Replaces Him

Yahya Quits, Bhutto Succeeds Him

Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan resigned as president of Pakistan December 20 and was immediately replaced by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was sworn in as president and martial law administrator. By taking the two titles, Bhutto assumed full powers over both civilian and military administrations and returned the government to civilian rule for the first time since 1958. Bhutto, however, was expected to rule by emergency decree for the present.

Yahya had announced December 18 his decision to quit and turn over the reins of government to Bhutto upon his arrival from New York, where he had been pleading his country's case before the U.N. hearings on the Indian-Pakistani crisis.

Yahya had been under powerful military and civilian pressure to resign following the December 17 acceptance of the Indian cease-fire offer. He had come under particularly heavy criticism December 18 from Prime Minister Nurul Amin, head of the opposition seven-party United Coalition of Pakistan.

In a statement demanding his immediate resignation, Amin said: "The tragedy of East Pakistan...in which the national army was forced to surrender its arms and the order of cease-fire against the sentiments of the people are the logical results of the policies Yahya has been following over the last three years." The statement concluded: "Internally, these policies have also led to a civil war and encouraged India to commit aggression against our fatherland. Internationally, we were not able to muster sufficient assistance. Finally, our army of East Pakistan was confronted with a difficult surrender situation and tremendous odds and had to face a humiliating disaster."

The Pakistani air force was said to have played a key role in forcing Yahya to remove himself from office by threatening a possible coup unless he stepped aside.

Anti-government demonstrations were held in Rawalpindi December 18 protesting Yahya's acceptance of the Indian cease-fire offer.

In one of his first acts as president, Bhutto December 20 retired Yahya and six other high ranking officers from the army. He said his first task was to seek agreement with leaders of East Pakistan in creating a new government, indicating that Pakistan had not given up claims to the province despite the defeat of government forces there and the establishment of Bangla Desh. Bhutto denounced what he called Indian military occupation of the eastern wing.

Bhutto also named Lieutenant General Abdul Gul Hassan, chief of the general staff, as acting commander in chief of the armed forces. Gul Hassan had been one of Yahya's severest critics.

Bhutto appointed Nurul Amin as vice president December 21. Amin was a Bengali. Bhutto also announced that Bengali secessionist leader Sheik Mujibur Rahman would soon be released from prison and placed under house arrest, Bhutto was leader of the Pakistan People's party. Yahya had appointed him deputy premier and foreign minister December 3. He had previously served as foreign minister from 1963 to 1966.

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